

Canadian crash cover brings back memories of one of nation's worst air disasters

It isn't often that crash covers with perfins wind up in the hands of collectors, but Ron Whyte (#2586) of British Columbia has shared one such cover, along with the fascinating history of the crash involved.

A Trans-Canada Airlines four-engine passenger plane with 31 passengers and a crew of four was on a flight from Montreal to Vancouver. It was running four hours late and flying at about 15,000 feet over Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, on April 8, 1954, when it was struck in mid air by a Royal Canadian Air Force training plane doing aerial acrobatics.

All 35 people aboard the plane died as did the two airmen aboard the RCAF trainer. Wreckage from the two plane plummeted to the ground, striking three houses and damaging a nearby golf course.

Among those killed in the crash were a member of the Canadian parliament and his wife and several prominent businessmen.

The flight carried a quantity of Canadian mail and much of it was recovered, although most was seriously damaged by the crash and the fire that engulfed the plane on the way down.

White has two covers re-covered from the flight.

One of them was addressed to his late father who was a freight agent for Canadian National Rail-

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in Van-

couver. That cover bears a CNR meter and was mailed in Toronto.

The other cover, which bears a partial CPR perfins of Canadian Pacific Railways, was mailed April 7 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Dave Seaton at the Hotel Vancouver.

Inside the cover is a letter from an assistant manager at the Royal Alexandra Hotel in Winnipeg asking for help securing a room at the Vancouver hotel for a friend.

What makes the cover more fascinating to Whyte is that the slogan cancellation on the cover promotes the British Empire Games held in Vancouver in July and August 1954.

It was at those games that Bannister & Landy both broke the four-minute mile, a feat which earned them a statue in Vancouver. You may recall that Bannister had been the first to run a four-minute mile in May 1954 in London.

The other markings on the cover tell the crash story.

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CPR perfins on Canadian crash cover

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A red rubber stamped mark on the front notes that it was salvaged from the TCA wreck and red rubber stamp marking on the back carries the endorsement of the Moose Jaw District Post Office Inspector and an April 8, 1954 date.

At the time it was the worst accident ever involving a scheduled airliner in Canada. It was front-page news all over the nation.

The CPR perfins is Canadian pattern C52, position 1, with four pins missing from the pattern at bottom right. It is on Scott #288, which is a scarce stamp with the C52 pattern on it compared with other stamps in the 284-288 series. Whyte says the only copy he has in his collection is the one on this cover.

